
Husbands To Be Charged For Raping Wife?

Jamaican law-makers are debating a new bill, which could see husbands being charged for raping their wives. The proposed Sexual Offences Act seeks to bring under one umbrella, the various laws relating to rape, incest and other sexual offences, while repealing the Incest Punishment Act and the Offences Against the Person Act.

In opening the debate in Tuesday's Parliamentary sitting of the House, Prime Minister Bruce Golding highlighted provisions in the proposed legislation that cover marital rape.

In the Sexual Offences bill, a husband commits the offence of rape against his wife if the act is committed without her consent.

"To recognize that the possession of a marriage certificate does not give someone the licence for sexual abuse ... so caution had to be exercised to avoid abuse, especially in relationships that sometimes become turbulent and perhaps for a moment, there are feelings of vindictiveness that can find their expression in abusing a provision," said Mr. Golding.

According to the Prime Minister, the Sexual Offences bill, will among other things, seek to impose heavy sanctions on persons found to be aiding and abetting grievous sexual acts.

"It's going to be treated in the same way as if that person had performed the act ... in the past, it would be aiding and abetting and it would perhaps be treated with some lesser severity but the intention is ensure that that is treated as seriously, so that in this context, grievous sexual assault is gender neutral, but just as importantly, it will attract the same penalties as rape would attract," he said.

The debate will continue next week.

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